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LIFE AND TIME.

A

BIRTH-DAY MEMORIAL

OF

SEVENTY YEARS.

WITH

MEMORIES AND REFLECTIONS

FOR

THE AGED AND THE YOUNG.

BY

ABSALOM PETERS, D.D.

BORN SEPTEMBER 19, 1793.



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A WORD OF APOLOGY.

THE appearance of this Poem will doubtless be a surprise to others, as its production was to the writer. If it shall not be deemed preposterous for one to have commenced writing in verse, at the age of threescore years and ten, my first apprehensions will be happily relieved. But the occasion was inspiring; I had leisure for reflection; and though utterly unused to the production of poetry, I was conscious of the stir of poetical thoughts and imaginings. I felt assured, also, that my children, for whom alone I purposed to write a few lines, would forgive me this folly—if it should be so deemed—of an old man.

The result was a poem, which I had not intended to write; but, as the boy said, when reproved for whistling, “It whistled itself!”

“I lisped the numbers, for the numbers came.”

I read it to my family and a few friends, on my seventieth birth-day, September 19, 1863, and by their affectionate approval and request, conceived the design of committing it to the press. Two years, however, I have hesitated—have delayed its publication, and, by occasional revisions, have perhaps improved its euphony and rhythm.

Whatever may now be thought of my first essay at poetical writing, I cannot doubt that the memories, sentiments, and reflections here presented, will be grateful and cheering to others, as they have been and still are to myself. Possibly they may be deemed by some a fitting Birth-Day or New-Year's Gift, from the aged to the young, or from the young to the old. That they may not be read in vain is the earnest wish of

THE AUTHOR.

NEW YORK, Sept., 1865.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

BY RAY PALMER, D. D.



To the personal friends of Dr. Peters, nothing apologetic need have been said in respect to the following pages. They have known him as filling prominent positions among the leading men of his time ; and remember with what ability and practical tact he has written and wrought, in the various fields of Christian labor which he has occupied. *They* will not fail to sympathize with the reminiscences and the personal feelings here embodied.

It may not be amiss, however, to say to others into whose hands it may come, that the venerable author must not be supposed to offer this, his first, and probably his last poem, as a perfect specimen of the *Ars Poetica*. He well understands that the power of writing poetry of a high order, even though craved by an in-born instinct, is only to be acquired by patient thought and effort. A first attempt, at any

period of life, must needs be imperfect. But as a *jeu d'esprit*, suggested by a particular domestic celebration, and expressing the thoughts and feelings natural to a cheerful old man, in the review of an active and useful life, this poem will certainly be deemed, by thoughtful readers, a remarkable production. It is sensible, hearty, genuine. It has passages of real poetry, as well as sound philosophy ; and a poetic atmosphere is, to a good degree, thrown around the whole. To have made it, in the circumstances, artistically faultless, would have been hardly less a miracle, than to have produced the Apollo Belvedere at a first essay. It will be accepted, however, as very creditable to the genius of the author, and well worthy to be read. The writer of these lines has himself read it—not as a critic—with pleasure and profit ; and hopes that many quiet years of healthful age may be granted to his honored friend and brother, before he shall sleep with his fathers. At least, let his sunset be serene and his morning without a cloud !

ALBANY, Sept. 16th, 1865.

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BIRTH-DAY MEMORIAL.



A LIFE-SKETCH OF SEVENTY YEARS.

DECADES of years, agone ! agone !
The toils, the tears, the joys are done !
Agone the age assigned to men !
Evanished, threescore years and ten !

Awake, O Genius ! laggard, late !
In hoary age, to vindicate
The adage true of classic writ :
“*Poeta nascitur, non fit.*”*

If such my birth, how long concealed !
Nor time nor change that birth revealed ;
A busy life, of earnest prose,
Had clipp'd the wings of thoughts that rose,

* A poet is *born*, not *made*.

Till late, perchance this natal morn
Shall wake to song a poet *born*—
Long time ago—when parents smiled,
On then a babe, in region wild,
Where North New Hampshire snuffed the
breeze—

Boreal winds o'er Alpine trees—
And yeomen hardy felled the wood,
Raised flocks and herds where forests stood,
Adotting vales and hills with fields,
That grew the grain hard culture yields,
Near Grafton's granite mountains high,*
Snow-capped in early autumn's sky.
And there, to-day, the hill-tops wave,
Look down, and watch my mother's grave.

Oh, wake to lays of *life* that *grows*,
While time's returnless river flows!
Though years ago were bare of rhyme,
Old age may sing of Life and Time.

Through changing seasons, moons and suns,
So many years my memory runs,

* Appendix A.

That dim in distance are the days
Of early, childish thoughts and plays ;
Hazy and indistinct they seem,
As 'twere a long-remembered dream ;
Though then, I trow, "the child" began
To be the "father of the man."

But musings lofty of the boy,
Sublime, and fraught with dread and joy,
Live fresh in recollection now,
Of whence, and where, by whom, and how
The world itself began to be ?
How creatures live, and think, and see ?—
Creation vast, above, around,
Unmeasured all, abyss profound !—
And dreamy plans of life were built,
With boyish hope and fancy guilt,
Minims of dreams of vagrant thought,
So oft, in time, have come to naught.

Those musings too were redolent
Of young resolves, of high intent,
Which stir of martial life inspires, *
In sons of patriotic sires.

* Appendix B.

For then the nation too was young,
From old oppressions bravely wrung ;
Then lived the heroes of the war,
Who laid, for ages thence afar,
On vast Columbia's land and main,
The corner-stone of Freedom's reign.
And, though a child—six summers sped—
I well recall, my father said,
With tears of manly sorrow shed :—
“Sad tidings !—Washington* is dead !”

We wept ; the nation mourned his end,
As nation ne'er had mourned a friend.
But Freedom lived—the nation's pride—
A moulding power—my joy and guide.

Thence onward came increase of knowledge ;
The home, the farm, the school, the college,†
To tone the life, the mind to frame,
And discipline, to manly aim,
The skill and power to do and know,
As culture causes plants to grow—
My early aspirations high,
The brilliant paths of life to try,

* Appendix C.

† Appendix D.

Till—wrought by grace, a change of heart—
My choice became the better part.

Fit education then was sought,
To realize my master-thought ;
With months of teaching—scholar's aid,*
By which a self-support was made—
In years of study, craved by all,
Who ponder well the pulpit's call.

[My thoughts run back, to sketch again and
fix,

In mem'ry dear, those years, a score and six,
Spent all in preparation, slow and sure,
Till grew the child a man, adult, mature,
To grapple with the high demands of life,
Put full-wrought armor on, and breast the strife.

Concurrent thus, my life's young crescent
rills—

Their bubbling springs on bleak New England
hills—

Meand'ring thence, from hill to vale, unite,
To form the river-flow of manly might ;

* Appendix E.

Or twigs were bent, t'incline the growing tree,
As love forecast the man, the child should be.

The mother's tender care, the sister's smile,
With nameless gentle kindnesses the while;
The father's thoughtful word, his stern command;
The brother's genial, ready, helping hand,
Combined to stay the swervings of my youth;
And so, with home-bred industry and truth—
A lithe physique, by farm-work rendered
strong—

Fit body for the mind—enduring long—
To shape the boy, by teachings new and old,
To manhood's high behests, and virtue's mould.

The school-room adds an impulse fresh and
new—

The impetus of many there, or few—
To win respect, the prize of merit take,
And seek improvement for improvement's sake.

Then classic schools and college halls succeed,
T'expand the sphere, and deep impress the need
Of larger learning, as the helm of power,
Which high ambition seeks, the coming hour.
Competing class-mates join the honored strife,
And friendships there are formed that last for life,

Recast or modify the social state,
 And early tell on life's success, and late.
 And oft life's calls and ends are pondered there—
 The field, the world—and each must take his
 share ;

While some there are, who consecrate to God
 Their knowledge all, and all their power of good.

With such, through grace, I raised my humble voice,

And sought instruction suited to my choice
 In higher schools of sacred, learned lore,
 And shaped to use the manhood gained before.]

Then came the years of past'ral care,*
 To preach the word, and nothing spare,
 Of counsel wise, o'er human ken,
 To win to Christ the souls of men ;
 To feed the flock, the lambs to feed,
 Dispensing grace for all their need,
 And bearing on my heart the prayer,
 That all who lived and wandered there,

* Appendix F.

By love constrained no more to stray,
Might learn the Truth, the Life, the Way.
Withal my ardent zeal was high—
The thousand promised years anigh—
In all the dwellings of the race,
To spread the health of truth and grace.*

The past'ral care suspended then,
To meet the larger claims of men,
Came years of preparation vast,†
To plant at home, deep down and fast,
In Christian institutions blest,
From north to south, from east to west,
The heart-grown root of piety,
The nation righteous, people free,
Nor dashed nor scourged by venging rod,
Constrained to love, by love of God.

Of conflict,‡ years, and years of peace,
Years all of hope, of large increase,
Ripe fruit appearing, and anon
It shook, like fields of Lebanon.

* Appendix G.

† Appendix H.

‡ Appendix I.

Then years of editorial toil,*
 Recording, from the world's turmoil,
 Instructions learnèd, true, and sage,
 To guide the young, the coming age—
 My tongue employed, my counsel sought,
 Where "sons of prophets" still are taught—
 Till—more than half a century gone—
 Again the harness girded on—
 'Twas mine to guide another flock,†
 A decade more, to Christ the Rock;
 To preach the word, to watch for souls,
 Where village homes and college rolls
 Supplied a congregation rare,
 To tax the Pastor's skill and care.

And then, when life was waxing old,
 And threescore years and one were told,
 Monitions gentle warnèd my fears
 Of waning strength for coming years;
 And other duties still engage
 The failing powers of growing age.

And not *alone*, in toil and care,
 My manhood all, but, everywhere,

* Appendix J.

† Appendix K.

Were mingled in with pen and preaching,
Pervading all, and all o'erreaching.
The years of wedded life and love—*
The best of earth, the charm thereof—
Till rounding out the forty-fourth,
Of years prolonged, of double worth.

Of proud paternity, the years,
With joyful hopes, and cares, and fears—
Which only loving hearts can feel—
Changed oft by children's woe and weal.

And tearful sadness long was felt,
As, mourning for the lost, we knelt—
Sweet infants raised from earthly love,†
On angel-wings, to bliss above—
And worshipped God with living ones,
Surviving daughters dear and sons,
Who claimed the love of stricken hearts,
And, as by thousand winning arts,
Awaked anew our joy in theirs,
Returning duties for our cares,
Till, onward borne, by grace and truth,
O'er all the ebbs and flows of youth,

* Appendix L.

† Appendix M.

With us they stand, as peers and mates,
Companions, equals, duplicates ;
Mature in life's full vigor they,
We, failing piecemeal by decay.

We're changing places now ; as erst
They leaned on us, were fed and nursed,
So now we lean on them, and feel
Their loving, helping hand, and leal.
They lead the van, we lag in rear,
With children's children, loved and dear ;
In circles new their happy homes,
And they, for us, the heads of domes.

Mutations strange these years have wrought,
And time and Providence have brought
Young babes to manhood, parents down,
From manhood's pride and stately crown,
To decadence, the setting sun
Of life-work here so nearly done,
The shading of the day to even
Foretokens near the dawn of heaven.

THE BOON OF LONG LIFE.

WHAT now, to me, these by-gone years,
With all their changes, joys, and tears ?
So much of life, so much of time,
To fit my ransomed soul to climb,
Where, poised, in rapture, on the wing,
Ten thousand times ten thousand sing !
Yet life and time are not the same ;
Nor shall they equal honors claim.
Though side by side, and both my friends,
The one remains, the other ends.

Time's riches all, an empty show,
The Preacher wise hath said ; and so
The years to me, were I a mute,
A senseless, dumb, and thoughtless brute—
Of all the past, no good in mind—
To all the teeming future, blind.
But past and future joined in one,
Life's grand design still moving on,
Fruit stored in mem'ry from the past,
The faith of future waxing fast,

The quick'ning power of endless life
Upbearing us in toil and strife—
'Tis sure a blessing thus to live,
A boon which God alone could give.

And life prolonged is greater boon,
As morning bright'ning up to noon ;
Each passing year the life advancing
Still ever onward, and enhancing
The worth of every help and aid
By which a lofty life is made ;
Till, by the using, wasted fast,
'Tis laid aside, worn out and past.
But lives its influence evermore ;
And years succeed, as years before,
The fruits of later toils to yield,
On life's expanded harvest-field,
By grace laid up, in heav'nly store,
Till years and time shall never more
Claim part in life's possessions there,
Nor changing seasons have a share ;
But life immortal, quenchless light,
In one supernal day—no night ;
And, ceasing suns and worlds to roll,
Shall perfect joy and crown the soul.

Long years are wisdom's price for good,
To be exchanged for spirit-food
Of life divine ; nor can be made
The purchase wise, till all be paid,
To "buy the truth and sell it not."
The worth of years is simply what
They bring of wisdom to our minds,
Great pearl of wealth to him who finds.

'Tis then vast good to have survived,
So many years, to have outlived
An age, twice told, of living men,
Who, in my time, on earth have been—
To graves ago—while life, with me,
Alert and buoyant, strong and free,
Of sickness little knows, or pain,
Nor troubles e'er have broke the reign
Of trust in God and cheerful mind ;
Though crosses oft of plans, I find,
Have turned the lines of life and lot,
And shades have darkened o'er the plot
Of visions bright, of life's vain dreams,
Obscuring oft their shining beams ;
And sins unnumbered I deplore,
That haunt my pathway evermore.

Nor strangers know, nor I reveal,
Those secret griefs the heart must feel,
When loving care has failed to win
A dear one from the paths of sin—
How sorrow sore is thus incurred,
The heart made sick by “hope deferred.”

But few the troubles, clouds but few,
And hope renewed was ever new ;
Crushed often, but to rise again,
And buoy the spirit up ; and then,
One hope, to reach within the veil,
And pierce to light which cannot fail,
Has life to me made life to love,
So much, so very far above
Afflictions all, and all its losses,
Reverses dark, and grievous crosses,
That, in the bright sunlight of hope,
All forms of ill are swallowed up.
I name them not, nor dare deplore
My poverty of earthly store,
Since higher ends have been attained,
In better riches, sought and gained.

Sin all forgiven, 'tis *only* good,
That, by the grace of God, I've stood,
And toiled for life, and not in vain,
The noblest ends of life to gain,
With heart and hand, and tongue and pen,
These vanished years, threescore and ten.

It is, indeed, a good unmeasured,
That I have thus enjoyed and treasured—
The thoughts and loves of pleasant places,
Of happy homes and smiling faces ;
Nor less, that I have borne a part
With mourners oft—the stricken heart—
And sought for them a sweet relief,
From Him who giveth praise for grief ;
Have wrought for God in larger spheres,
And reaped rewards of joy for tears ;
Have had a share in movements great,
For light and truth in Church and State ;
For knowledge and the rule of right ;
For grace to reign, in place of might ;
Have studied long high nature's laws,
In much that is, shall be, and was ;
Have breathed the air, have seen the sun,
And earth, in gorgeous beauty run,

In cycles grand, through mighty changes;
 And things alive, in world-wide ranges,
Flora and *Fauna*, bird and bee,
 The life that swims in lake and sea,
 And creeping things, forever teeming,
 All dying, and yet ever seeming
 To reproduce themselves in kind,
 That life, in time, no end should find;
 Nor life's mutations find an end,
 Till man alone in bliss ascend,
 From time and change, afar away,
 From nether to supernal day.

THE LAST, THE BEST OF THE AGES.

NOR would I fail to raise, and add
 A note of praise, for being had,
 So high aloft, upon the stage
 Of earth and time's progressive age;
 Made all of ages gone, of man,
 By lapse of years, since time began.

'Twere good to have foundations laid,
 Near dawn of time, when earth was made,

And shouted morning stars their joy ;
But better, life, and life's employ,
When holy Prophets spake and sang ;
And better still, when heaven rang
With songs of angels, heard on earth,
Proclaiming man's Redeemer's birth.

But best of all the ages past,
Is that, the highest, and the last ;
The building rising, stone on stone—
Man's work thereon will soon be done—
The top-stone high, brought forth, thereof,
And shouts from earth, and all above,
Of "Grace unto it"—grace--shall roll
From east to west, from pole to pole !

To such a consummation nigh,
Men here below, and powers on high,
Are hastening on events of time ;
And systems vast, of sin and crime,
Are yielding to the march of God,
With mercy's sceptre and the rod
Subduing nations to His reign,
Revolted realms to peace again.
Old pagan idols, near and far,
Are dashed and dead, in holy war :

They rise no more, where Gospel light
O'erdauns the shadows of the night ;
And thrones and dynasties effête,
That grind the poor, exalt the great,
And papal powers, one and all,
Are crumbling to their final fall.

Of these, dark ages was the day ;
But governments of milder sway,
Of wiser and more just devising,
On these demolished ruins rising,
Ease now the bonds of old oppressions,
And offer new and large concessions
To human rights, and conscience free,
To work for man's high destiny.

And nature's forces, erst occult,
Arcana hid, without result,
Or sleeping aye since time began,
Or working there, unseen by man,
In nature's lab' ratory deep,
Where nature's laws her secrets keep ;
Or partly known, but unexplored—
Their use, in practice, all ignored—

Abiding time, have come to light ;
And brain and genius, wisdom's might,
Inventions apt, and skill, and art,
Have grandly now unlocked, in part,
Of nature's secrets hid, the powers,
Have touched the key and made them ours—
Ours all, to work for human weal—
Affix'd, to science deep, the seal
Of consecration high, and worth,
Handmaid of truth and right on earth.

Mad lightning harnessed, steam compressed,
Obey, and work for man's behest ;
And wit and skill, applied to these
And other forces, wrought with ease,
With combinations strange and new—
The work of many done by few—
Have multiplied the arts of man,
The ocean and the earth to scan ;
To give to life a wider scope,
To states and nations higher hope ;
And such is now the rush of thought,
Of grand achievements, quickly wrought,
That days of time seem years ago,
And many ages lived in one.

OURS THE BEST OF THE NATIONS.

AND, last among the nations blest,
By grace the greatest and the best,
The land of freedom and the brave,
From eastern shore to western wave,
Has been my home, these seventy years ;
Nor, yielding yet high hopes to fears,
Do we forget our fathers' God,
Or spare the treasure or the blood
Demanded in the nation's cause,
Her union, liberty, and laws.

By viper stung, self-born within,
Corruption breathing, giant sin ;
But still the nation's heart is brave,
The nation's arm high nerved to save
Her cherished blessings from the blight
Of treason's grasp in deadly fight,
And wipe forever from the fame
Of freedom's equity the name,
The foul reproach, the damning blot,
Of forcing bondage, as the lot

Of souls of men created free,
And made for immortality !

As God is true, that crime shall cease.
Then justice, righteousness, and peace,
With union firm, shall bless the land ;
Defended then by His right hand
'Gainst crimes within and foes afar,
A bright, serene, and guiding star—
Star of the progress of the world,
Till Freedom's banner, high unfurled
O'er ev'ry land, on ev'ry sea,
Shall wave o'er all the nations free ;
"The golden rule" the earth shall span,
And man, the peer of ev'ry man—
Oppression having found an end—
Shall find in ev'ry man a friend.

FRUITS AND TREASURES OF LIFE.

SUCH visions years repeat to me ;
And more than eye hath seen, I see,
By grace revealed, of life to come,
Of happy spirits, at their home.

In humble part, to swell that throng,
Life, healthful thus to me, and long—
No merit claiming, as my own,
But naming what my Lord hath done—
Has not, I trust, been spent in vain,
For others' good ; and so to gain,
In congregations, served and loved,
And fields of missions, sought and proved,
For men redeemed, of each degree—
The high, the low, the bond, the free,
All things in Christ—the grace, the rod—
And they, with Christ, joint-heirs of God.

So mine the blessing, not unshared,
Nor mine alone the great reward ;
But others take, in gracious measures,
The living fruit—and rich the treasures,
Which all the elements possess
Of man's immortal blessedness.
By mercy great of God, the giver,
I share it all with them forever,
And hail the day when I may say :
Here, Lord, am I, and here are they,
The children dear which thou hast given,
By grace renewed, and raised to heaven.

A WELCOME TO OLD AGE AND DEATH.

WHAT other years may be in store,
To waft me to the "shining shore,"
I cannot guess. I only trow,
That years, if given, will come and go,
As years have ever done before ;
But dew of youth will never more
Return to me. Old age instead,
The trembling hand, the hoary head—
The eye bedimmed, and deaf the ear—
Shall mark each coming added year.

Hard sickness, pain, perchance, and sorrow,
May come in troops upon the morrow,
And ling'ring years may feel the scourge ;
Or days, instead of years, may urge
My life to sudden close ; and then
I'll welcome death, the lot of men.
But days or years, the more or few,
Shall welcomed be, with praises new.
If such there be reserved for me,
Welcome thy years, senility !

Not that decrepitude and pain
 Are welcome, as themselves a gain—
 'Tis not in man to welcome these—
 But, if God order so, and please,
 We suffer pain for greater good ;
 The benefaction understood,
 We welcome sorrow, or its cause,
 As but, in happiness, a pause
 For strength. So painful years are given
 As aids and stepping-stones to heaven.

But gentler discipline may prove
 The kindness of the Father's love ;
 And, saved the pain, I'll not despair
 Of years to come, serene and fair—
 "A green old age," in wisdom's ways—
 Cheerful and calm, those coming days,
 From mid-life's anxious cares at rest,
 Of all my years, the last, the best.

Nor would I live, in time, a day
 Beyond my usefulness, or stay,
 The wreck of all that I have been,
 To meet, in clouds, earth's closing scene ;
 Though then, upon the soul, no less
 Might beam the Sun of Righteousness.

But, done with earth, its face o'ercast,
Nor eye, nor ear, nor touch, nor taste,
For pleasure or for service here,
I'd rather leave the loved and dear
Of earth and time, and rise in flight
From clouds below to heavenly light.

DESIRES SUBMITTED.

BE such my lot, if God shall choose,
Nor let me, living, miss or lose
My long-loved hopes and props in life—
Sons, daughters all, and loving wife,
Who shared the joys and toils of youth.
With kindness, gentleness, and truth ;
My children's mother, dearest friend,
Till earthly toils and joys shall end.
And then we'll be with angels bright,
Where dearer tie than nuptial rite
Shall hold us one with all the blest,
In higher, purer, love and rest.

But if, with grief and trembling tread,
My lot shall be to mourn the dead,

Or, worse than death, of ills the chief,
My heart be wrung with sorer grief,
I'll meet the wreck of life or love,
With faith and hope made fast above,
And crave one joy, in mercy given,
With less of earth, and more of heaven,
Calm, peaceful, and contented still,
To suffer God's most holy will.
That will be done, whate'er betide
My earthly hopes, or earthly pride.

A CONTRAST OF LIFE AND TIME.

So life has been, from day of birth,
And shall be, to my "last of earth,"
A gift of God, and rich forever ;
A worthy boon of Him, the giver.

If life were time, 'twould waste away,
Be less to-morrow than to-day ;
But life renewed is life eternal,
And not, as time and years, diurnal,
But ever onward, upward growing,
By seeing, having, treasuring, knowing ;

Its wealth immense, the spoils of years,
Laid up, for use, above the spheres.

'Tis not, then, *life* that wastes, decays,
By lapse of time, and flight of days.
Life still remains, a conscious being ;
And, more than present hearing, seeing,
It holds, in memory, all the past,
And holds, in faith, the future vast,
Of onward life ; the living soul,
One ever, conscious of the whole.

So present, future, past combine,
To make man's life progressive shine,
And brighter, clearer still the light,
Of truth more known, and seen, as sight
Invades the field of faith, that peers
Through mists and shades of coming years,
And measures being's ceaseless round,
Afar beyond time's utmost bound.

So life to me, a living soul,
Is present, constant, deathless whole.
I've had it all my years ago,
I have it now, 'tis all my own,

And shall be, all my years to come ;
And then, when God shall call me home,
The self-same life shall all be mine ;
In death the same, with no decline ;
And mine, with larger scope and joy,
In heavenly rest and high employ ;
Mine, laden with the fruits of years,
In store beyond the blight of tears.

LIFE AT THE AGE OF THREESCORE YEARS
AND TEN.

CONSCIOUS of such a life to-day,
My thoughts run backward, and away,
Onward afar, in realms of rest,
With all the pardoned and the blest.

Backward, I live a transient space,
To whence my life began its race ;
And time before yields life to me,
By ages read of history.

But since my temporal life began,
The seventy years, how brief a span

Of ages past ! And oh, how small,
Of man's uncounted millions all,
The number I have seen and known !
Seen, all the rest, by God alone.
They had their time before my birth,
Or lived, beyond my goings forth,
In other longitudes and zones,
Where earth a human foot-print owns,
Or nations great have had their day,
Have thronged, and changed, and passed away.

These all to me have strangers been ;
Have lived, by me, unknown, unseen.
And though the circle of my age—
Well known to me—has on its page
Of time's account made high its mark,
Yet gone to graves, alone and dark,
Are most of all I loved in youth.
The old, when I was young, in sooth,
Revered and patriarchal men,
And matrons kind, all living then ;
And parents dear have, long ago,
Departed hence, to see and know
The bliss above ; and old, or dead,
Are all the loved, who erst have sped

Their ages synchroanal with mine.
Bright stars have set that used to shine ;
Dear brothers, sisters, friends agone,
Till few remain ; and rarely one,
Of all the living, human race,
Presents a long-familiar face.

The moving throngs, by boat and car,
The squadrons hastening to the war,
The crowds at rural, gay retreats,
In marts of business, or in streets
Of bustling city trade and show,
Where restless millions come and go,
With hosts of idlers, poor and vain,
And thousands toiling hard for gain ;
Thronged churches and conventions grave,
Lost souls or commonwealths to save ;
And men in all the walks of life—
Their competitions keen and rife—
Of human kind, the surging tide,
The shady and the sunny side ;
Save here and there an old man gray,
And oft the young, politely say
Kind words to aged men, I see—
Else all, alas ! were strange to me !

I know them, true, as fellow-men,
To man's high future born, I ken,
But not of mine, a later race,
Hard following after mine apace ;
Installed in places others held,
They walk the paths of men of eld.

Perchance your fathers well I knew,
Two generations gone ; but you !
Whence have you come ? and whither bound ?
Borne on the whirling world around !
A wilderness of men ! Some, leaves
Alone abearing ; others, sheaves
Of grain, from seed once sown with tears,
The gathered wealth of toilsome years ;
And now they shout "the harvest home,"
Of generations then to come.

Nor yet are these all strangers quite.
Old names beloved I used to write,
Of genial early friends, and true,
Or aged sires, in youth I knew,
Borne erst by sons, and now by theirs—
Of fathers' virtues worthy heirs—
Renew my memory of the past,
And link my best affections fast,

To living men and blooming youth.
Unknown or known, these all, in truth—
The friends of friends, till death my own—
Are now my life, “my joy and crown.”

I live in them, as sire in son,
And joy in all their doings, done
For man's advancement, and the praise
Of Him who giveth length of days.
Nor would I fail to sympathize
In all that's good, and just, and wise,
Though wrought by younger lives than mine,
Increasing they as I decline.

The lights of Church, and lights of State,
Arising now, or risen of late,
Shine forth o'er larger, wider spheres,
Than lights ago, of former years.
The world-wide field, made clearer now,
Invites the sower forth to sow ;
The nation, greater now than then,
The crisis more intense, as when
Disease, at point of death or cure,
The patient's trembling life t' insure,
Demands physician's greatest skill :
Incompetence, neglect, would kill.

So now, the nation's mighty throes,
With deep distress for threatened woes,
In judgment for its crimes, demand
Of ev'ry head, and heart, and hand,
The skill of all the wise and true,
And all the work that man can do,
With humble confidence and trust
In God, the patron of the just.

The fathers' God, the God of sons,
Holds in His hands His chosen ones ;
And signs of gracious help appear,
Signs of our Heavenly Father's care,
In giving, to the people's choice,
A Ruler chief whom ev'ry voice
Proclaims God-fearing, honest, true ;*
With men in places high, anew,
In council wise, in battle brave,
To breast the storm, to ride the wave ;
The soldier's arm, on tented field,
The nation's mighty power to wield ;

* It must be remembered that this was written September, 1863, in the midst of the great war of the Union, and of the Administration of President Lincoln.

With holy gifts of precious blood,
To gain the nation's greatest good ;
Her consecration, evermore,
To those high aims that early bore
Her Pilgrim Fathers o'er the main,
And later fathers still, to gain,
In days of Washington's renown,
The triumph, victory, the crown
Of freedom's reign in righteousness—
The world's high hope—mankind to bless.

This all is lingering life to me ;
I live in all the brave and free ;
Nor less in those who suffer wrong,
The weak, in bondage to the strong.
Still in the nation's faith I share,
And pray the nation's ardent prayer,
Praise God on high for battles won,
And mourn the dead, as if my own ;
And warm my fellowship with all
Who preach or pray, or stand or fall,
In service of the Prince of Peace,
Whose kingdom vast shall e'er increase,

Though nations scourged, and battles fought,
And all the carnage wars have wrought,
Be called in wrath, to clear the way
For that auspicious, coming day,
When wars shall cease, and earth be free—
Man's universal jubilee.

TO CHILDREN AND FRIENDS.

NOR do I now with sadness view
Those putting harness on anew,
Which I am putting off. Nor sad
To me the wreck, or good or bad,
Of all that I have ever had
Of time ago, with tears or glad.
I yield it all to God, the giver,
With thanks, that soon my life, forever,
Will take no note of time, or loss—
The crown then given above the cross.

But younger lives, most dear to me,
Still on the tide of time, shall see
More perfect good than I have seen ;
In years more blest than I have been.

Take, then, thy years, my child, my friend,
In number such as God shall send ;
Garner their fruits, and let them fly ;
Or few, or more, their end is nigh ;
But life, which dying years shall cherish,
If grace be given, shall never perish.
The life is more than years untold,
Far better wise to be, than old.

Be life, not years, our chief concern ;
Then years will bring us, in return,
Rich gifts of grace, to life below,
And bright the world to which we go ;
Where life, the same that years have left,
Of earthly home and friends bereft,
Will crown the joys, begun on earth,
With boundless bliss, of heavenly birth.

There, with the good of all the ages,
Names bright, on time's recorded pages ;
United there in dearer ties
Than ever friends or families
On earth have known, and on the wing,
We'll worship God, and rise, and sing,
With seraphs high, the song of songs,
In music strange to mortal tongues,

And welcome there our loved of time,
By one, and one, to bliss and clime,
Balmy and bright, of angel's joy,
Forever pure, without alloy.

THE TRUE VISION OF TIME.

NOR time, with you, a point of stay ;
Point whence to rise, in changeless day :
Nor yet beginning of an *end* ;
Life thus begun shall ever tend
Away from time, nor cease to be
An *endless*, joyous entity.
And, seen from that vast life away,
An age of time will seem a day,
A point, at which that life begun
Its ceaseless cycles grand to run.

Nor this a dream. To God appears
One day of time as thousand years,
And thousand years as one brief day :
And faith accepts. Then who shall say,
God's vision vast, of time, is wrong,
And ours the gauge of ages long ?

Inborn to life, in midst of time,
We ride some rolling wave sublime,
Till dies that wave upon the shore •
Then time to us is never more ;
And none can all its measure know
Till waves of time have ceased to flow.

'Tis boundless to our vision here,
So vast is time, and yet so near ;
As, near the side of mountain high,
In vain the pupil of the eye
Expands itself to comprehend,
From top to base, from end to end,
The vast dimensions, circling lines,
Which distant sight evolves, defines,
And brings the Alpine shape to view,
In lines of beauty, grand and new !

Of time, we never see the whole ;
Parts only to our vision roll.
So time is here a running river ;
But seen its source and ending never.
So time appears a surging ocean ;
While on its waves we feel its motion,

As ship at sea, with pennant high,
But shore or bound'ry never spy.
So, on revolving world, we ride,
And never see the other side.

But lift us up, where God resides,
Where life immortal e'er abides,
And let us gaze on time afar,
As now we see a fixèd star ;
How, thence, will distant time appear—
An age, a century, a year ?

Millions of measures of the earth,
That far-off star revolves, shines forth,
Defined, and bounded to the sight,
A twinkling point in vault of night ;
Till day returns, with change of view,
And stars are lost in azure blue.

So, seen from all above, appears
A day, an age, a thousand years ;
Cycles and centuries, the same,
Time's measure all—measureless name—
A point, a dot, in boundless space,
Where living men, a sinful race,
All have their day, as we have had ;

And Christ revealed, with tidings glad,
Has wrought a mystery profound,
Which angels' wisdom cannot sound ;
High heaven peopling from the earth,
By souls renewed—a gracious birth—
Myriads of spirits passing on,
Where erst the righteous all have gone ;
Yet all in time, a point so small,
As seen from life eternal, all,
It counts as nothing, on the score
Of man's enjoyment evermore.

Then let our ages pass away,
Labor for daily bread, and pray ;
'Tis worth the toil, the pains, the care,
The diligence, the daily prayer,
Which yield for man a good estate,
Time's short necessities to meet ;
And, for dependants and the poor,
To lay aside convenient store.
But treasure, *stored* for *greatness*' sake,
Is mark of folly, vain and weak.
Evanished soon the gain, the pelf,
Time's greatness all, and time itself,

Will dwindle to a point afar,
As now appears that distant star ;
Or, merged in life, be lost to sight,
As stars occult in morning light.

APPENDIX.

THE following notes seemed necessary properly to explain the passages to which they refer. They are appended solely for this purpose, and with no design to give an autobiography of the author. It is presumed they will be acceptable to such readers as may be curious to know the precise meaning of the allusions referred to in the poem.

NOTE A, PAGE 10.

“Near Grafton’s granite mountains high.”

Grafton, in Northern New Hampshire, is my native county. My father, General Absalom Peters, became a resident there when that part of the State was comparatively new and wild. He was a native of Hebron, Connecticut, and a graduate of Dartmouth College in 1780. On leaving college, he was immediately engaged in the closing struggles of the War of Independence; was captain in the Revolutionary Army, and aide to Major-General Bailey, in command of the northern frontiers of New Hampshire, and of the territory which is now the State of Vermont. The military experience here acquired prepared him to take a leading part in organizing the militia of the State, where he soon rose to the rank of brigadier-general, which, after a few years, he resigned. He was also several years a member of the State Legislature, was sheriff of the county, and was much employed and honored as a magistrate.

His main business, nowever, was that of a farmer in the town of Wentworth, where he opened a new farm of several hundred acres, and trained his children to habits of industry and the strictest economy.

My father traced his descent directly from a brother of the famous Rev. Hugh Peters, who immigrated to this country from England in 1635, and was pastor of the First Church in Salem, Massachusetts, but returned to London, on behalf of the colony, in 1641, where, having warmly espoused the cause of Cromwell, he became obnoxious to the partisans of the Crown, and was beheaded on the restoration of Charles the Second in 1660, a martyr to the cause of civil and religious liberty. His memory had been much maligned in English history, but has been of late effectually vindicated by Carlyle in his "Life of Cromwell," and by our own countrymen, the late Joseph Felt, of Boston, and Rev. Mr. Upham, of Salem, one of his successors in the pastorate of the First Church.

My mother was Mary Rogers, daughter of Nathaniel Rogers, Esq., of Leominster, Massachusetts, who claimed to be a lineal descendant from the martyr, John Rogers, burnt at Smithfield in 1555.

My parents were married in 1782, and began together their new settlement in the hill country of New Hampshire, where they raised to maturity a family of five sons and four daughters,* and remained until the death of my mother in 1819, at

* The names of the family are the following :—

John Rogers, born September 22d, 1783, a successful merchant in Troy, and afterwards in the City of New York, where he was several years an alderman, and was honored with other offices of public confidence and trust. He died April 24, 1858, aged seventy-four years.

Phebe, born May 13th, 1785, wife of the late Hon. Josiah Fisk, of Keesville, Essex County, New York, died August 29th, 1860, aged seventy-five years.

the age of sixty-three years. My father soon disposed of his farm and returned to Lebanon, Connecticut, near his native place, where, at the age of sixty-six, he was married to the widow of the late Rev. John Gurley, of Lebanon, a friend of his youth, and an estimable lady. Among her children were the late Hon. Henry Gurley, member of Congress from Louisiana; Mrs. Rev. Dr. Gillett, of Maine; Mrs. Prof. Hinkley, of Mississippi, and Rev. Ralph R. Gurley, late Secretary of the American Colonization Society, Washington, D. C. The last named is now the only survivor of the family.

My father and step-mother, though united late in life, lived happily together nearly twenty years, honored and loved by the children of both their families; and the former, surviving the latter about two years, died in the city of New York, April, 1840, aged eighty-six years. He was buried at Hebron,

Lydia, born February 25th, 1787, wife of the late Joseph Perry, Esq., of Keene, New Hampshire, is still living.

George Pierce, born May 30th, 1789, educated at West Point, a major in the United States Army, distinguished in the battle of Tippecanoe, and in the war of 1812, was twice wounded in battle, and died at Fort Gadsden, East Florida, November 28th, 1819, aged thirty years.

James Whitelaw, born June 20th, 1791, a successful merchant in Mobile and Blakely, Alabama, died December 1st, 1822, aged thirty-one years.

Absalom, born September 19, 1793, the subject of this memorial.

Mary, born October 2d, 1795, wife of the late Hon. Samuel Wilkeson, of Buffalo, New York, died August 25th, 1847, aged fifty-one years.

William Rogers, twin brother of Mary, is still living in respectability and comfort at Bloomfield, New Jersey.

Mira, born August 7th, 1797, wife of the late John W. Mason, of Saratoga, N. Y. formerly a merchant in Cincinnati and also in the city of New York, died October 26th, 1862, aged sixty-five years.

Connecticut, his native place, and was borne to his grave by aged men, companions of his childhood and youth.

NOTE B, PAGE 11.

“Which stir of martial life inspires.”

I cannot fail to recognize the influence of my father's military position and spirit upon my earlier impulses and aspirations. Nor was my experience singular at that early day in the history of American Independence. The spirit of the late Revolution was then earnest and pervading, and was a leading characteristic of the time and the country. Later generations can hardly appreciate its power in forming the character of the young. Boys were encouraged to learn the military drill, and I well remember the pride and conscious manliness with which, as captain, at the age of eleven and twelve years, I trained a company of sixty boys, with wooden guns, myself decked with the trappings of my father's Continental uniform, suited to my size. With special impressions of our military importance, at a Fourth of July celebration, I formed them in “hollow square” with arms at rest, to receive the commendation of the regimental colonel in a special address. Such scenes were among the most inspiring and invigorating of my early years.

NOTE C, PAGE 12.

“Sad tidings—Washington is dead !”

The scene here alluded to made an impression on my early susceptibilities which time has had no tendency to efface. It was almost literally as I have stated it; and child as I was, I was by no means unprepared to be deeply affected by the an-

nouncement. And the manner of it was dramatic and exciting. My mother was busy at her household cares, and myself and the younger children at hand, when my father came in with an expression of sorrow which I had not before witnessed, and said, with trembling voice and tearful eye: "I bring heavy tidings!—Washington is dead!" He then read the account from a newspaper bordered with broad blackened lines of mourning. The effect was memorable. No death had yet occurred in my father's family, and this was the first that brought mourning to our home. The name of Washington was a household word, and a home sorrow was that produced by his death. My father, by virtue of his office, wore the prescribed badge of mourning thirty days, and the oft-repeated expressions of grief and condolence with neighbors and friends impressed me with a sense of the great bereavement, which I could never forget. So will the death of President Lincoln be remembered, and still more effectively, by the children of the present generation.

NOTE D, PAGE 12.

"The home, the farm, the school, the college."

Until the age of sixteen years I was diligently trained to the labor of the farm, with not a few responsible cares, of which, with my brothers, I was held to a strict account, especially during the frequent absences of my father on public business. The advantages of this early farm education I have often had occasion to recognize, in my experience of the toils and cares of life. If, as has been said (and which to some extent is doubtless true), man's intellectual and moral developments are in proportion to the difficulties of his physical existence, surely the young laborers on that hard Northeastern farm, summer and winter, enjoyed some special advantages for the early ac-

quisition of the qualities of a vigorous and persistent practical manhood.

Add to the habits and qualities thus acquired, the moral training of my early home, and I have still higher grounds of grateful remembrance. With parents descended from a Puritan stock of martyred ancestors, and inheriting the same principles, the children could hardly fail to accept the teachings of the "New England Primer," as peculiarly their own. Amid all the disadvantages of a new settlement, where public religious instruction was only occasional, and often incompetent, it was every thing for us that our parents were well educated, wise, and judicious for our training at home. We were thus taught a strict observance of the Sabbath, with all the cardinal principles of a religious life, with a conscience towards God. And here I shall be pardoned for a tribute to my sainted mother, who, with a self-possession, dignity, and grace peculiarly her own, restrained us from the careless living of many around us, and, by her affectionate kindness and ever-consistent example, allured us away from the vices apt to prevail in communities comparatively rude and unorganized.

My education, to the age before named, was acquired wholly at the district school and at home. My attendance at school, after my earliest years, was confined to the winter months, and even then we were often taught by incompetent instructors. They were, however, the best we could procure in those days and in that new country; and it was well for my father's family that his instructions at home supplied in a measure the deficiencies of our teachers at school. By this advantage we became, in many points of accurate knowledge, "wiser than our teachers," and acquired a passable common-school education for that day. But our main business was work on the farm, and the care of stock, and of the house-

hold in winter, which often trenched upon our school hours ; and it may truly be said that whatever we gained at the district school was acquired by "the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties." It was, perhaps, all the more to be prized on that account, as we learned thus to value our acquisitions, and to embrace with eagerness better opportunities of improvement at a riper age.

In respect to my ultimate course of education, it may be observed, that it was a rule with my father to allow his boys, at the age of sixteen, to choose their course of life, and to seek the education required to answer its ends. I chose with much earnestness a military life, and an education at West Point. An older brother, George P. Peters, afterwards a major in the United States army, had been educated there, and was now a young officer ; and this, with my father's military position and spirit, had turned my aspirations in that direction. My father accordingly made application to the proper authorities, and received assurances of my appointment as a cadet at the next occurring vacancy. In the mean time, I went to Troy, New York, and was employed as a clerk in the store of my oldest brother, then a merchant in that city. But there, in compliance with the earnest request of my mother, who on my leaving home presented me a Bible, I read the Scriptures daily, and under the zealous ministry of Elder Webb, a Baptist clergyman whose church I attended, my mind became deeply impressed with a sense of ill-desert and of religious obligation. After much conflict of spirit I was enabled, as I have ever believed, by the power of divine grace, to appropriate the promises of God ; and my purpose became settled to devote my life to His service. My impulses were now strong to become a preacher of the gospel, and my previous choice of the art of war as my profession for life, became an object of entire disapproval and aversion.

In this frame of mind I wrote to my father, unfolding to him my new views and purposes of life, and requesting him to withdraw his application for my admission to the Military School. The result was that I returned home in the autumn of 1810, and, after a preparatory course of about eighteen months, at "Moore's School," in Hanover, N. H., I entered Dartmouth College, in 1812.

Meantime I had become a member of the Congregational church in Hanover, and pursued my studies with the single design of preparing for the Christian ministry.

Graduating in 1816, I repaired immediately to the city of New York, where I was engaged for a short time as a teacher, but was enabled, by the aid of generous friends, to enter the Theological Seminary at Princeton, N. J., in the autumn of the same year. There, under venerable and beloved professors, I pursued my studies until May, 1819, when I was licensed by the Presbytery of New York, and became a preacher of the gospel. My first sermon was preached in the old Brick Church, corner of Nassau and Beekman streets, to the congregation of the Rev. Dr. Spring.

NOTE E, PAGE 13.

"With months of teaching—scholars aid."

It is not uncommon for young men in our Northern colleges, and even in their preparatory course, to resort to teaching as a means of at least a partial self-support; and the district schools, in most country villages and farming communities, afford convenient fields for their youthful endeavors. In my early days this was, perhaps, more common than it is now. Most of my classmates in college were or had been occasional teachers; and, before the establishment of Normal Schools, teachers were selected with much less care than at present.

My first experience in this line was when I was sixteen years old, and before I had even commenced my fitting for college. My qualifications, though poor enough, were probably equal to the usual standard in the neighborhood. But as a part of my pupils were full-grown young men, and I was much younger, and small at that, the school committee agreed with my father that they would insure the good conduct of the larger scholars, and I was to be responsible only for the government of those of my own size and smaller.

This agreement was made known to the school, and was carried out in good faith by the committee. The older scholars were put upon their honor, and gave me no trouble. They seemed, indeed, to regard themselves as a *corps de reserve*, to see that the authority of the young master should not be effectually resisted, and I was soon convinced of their honorable and manly loyalty to the government of the school.

A case occurred which is at least amusing, and I may be pardoned for relating it. It shows at least that "some things can be done as well as others," even in the days of one's boyhood. Joseph was just about my age and size, and Thomas, his cousin, was a six-footer, sitting on the back seat. Joseph was required to give the inkstand to his younger brother, but refused. I told him it must be done—expostulated with him on the reasonableness of the demand, and the necessity of obedience in all good governments, assuring him also that I had the power to enforce my requirement, though I did not care to try it with my own hand, as his bodily power was, perhaps, nearly equal to my own, and a violent contest of strength before the school would be unseemly and perhaps improper. But, I added, "Joseph, you must obey!" He still refused. Whereupon I turned my face to the back seat and said, "Thomas, will you have the goodness to take the inkstand from Joseph, and give it to his brother?" No sooner

said than done. Thomas seized his cousin by the collar, raised him out of his seat, and, laying him on the floor, did as I had requested. Still holding the offender with a firm grasp, he turned to me and said: "Any thing more, master?" I thanked him for his kindness, and, excusing him from any further service, I told Joseph he might go to his seat. I then addressed him and the rest of the school on the great impropriety of his conduct, and the necessity of obedience to all reasonable commands.

The result was that Joseph's father chastised him at home for his disobedience, and sent him to school the next day with an humble confession of his wrong. Thus was settled, by proxy, the power of my authority, and the government of the school went on the rest of the winter with entire propriety and success.

After this, I taught school every winter during my preparatory and college course, and with growing satisfaction and success as my qualifications were increased. The practical experience thus attained, and the accuracy acquired in many of the elementary branches of knowledge, I have ever regarded as a highly valuable part of my education.

NOTE F, PAGE 15.

"Then came the years of pastoral care."

After my licensure as a preacher of the gospel, in May, 1819, I was employed as a Home Missionary a few months, by the Synod of Albany, and labored within its bounds. My field was the then destitute portions of Washington and Warren counties, in the State of New York, including Fort Edward, Sandy Hill, Glenn's Falls, Fort Ann, and Whitehall, in each of which I made a brief trial of my ministry, and not, I trust, without some good results. Faithful and prosperous churches

have since been gathered in those places, and possibly some "lively stones" were laid near their foundations by my instrumentality. Grateful memories still linger of the efforts and successes of those weeks of missionary labor.

Early in August of the same year I was invited to the First Church in Bennington, Vt., as a stated supply during the absence of its pastor, who had already resigned its charge, with the expectation of a formal dismissal after a few months. The difficulties and responsibilities of the position were soon seen to be great. Religion was comparatively stagnant and unprogressive, and the church and society were sadly riven by political and other parties. Yet the field was no less important than difficult. Venerable names were there, and a few remained whose piety had not yet yielded to the prevailing decay. Excellent materials existed for a substantial reform. But such a result seemed to me impossible, without a great sacrifice to effect it, and I was impressed with the feeling that that sacrifice must be my own. Beautiful, therefore, and tempting as was the field to my youthful vision, and cordial and friendly as were the people (for it was apparent that my labors were more than acceptable, and large audiences attended my preaching), I deliberately formed the purpose to sacrifice all my popularity there on the altar of duty, to accomplish the desired reform. I had then no thought that by thus losing my life I should gain it, even on the very field where the sacrifice was about to be made. This purpose I zealously pursued, with no other expectation than that I might thus, by Divine grace, prepare that field for the comfortable settlement and continued usefulness of some other minister, while I would trust God for a place in some other part of his vineyard.

Great then was my surprise when, after a few months, the way being prepared, I received the unanimous call of the

church and society to become their pastor. I had learned a lesson. I went to Bennington to learn it; and the instructions of it have sustained me in the severest trials and conflicts of life. That lesson is the safety of assuming all the responsibilities of manifest duty, and of trusting God for results.

I was ordained and installed pastor of the church in Bennington, July 5th, 1820. It was then the only church of any denomination in a township containing a population of more than two thousand, all of whose spiritual wants claimed my attention and care. Meantime I had been married, and my young wife entered with me into all the cares of the flock. Ardent was the first love of our ministry to the people who had thus invited us to their service; and still it lingers in pleasant memories, while we have the best reason to know that our affection was largely and warmly returned. Trials, it is true, were appointed us on that field. Immoralities were rebuked and measures of reform suggested, which met with violent and persistent opposition. But the church remained united in nobly resisting its assaults, and sustaining the ministry of the truth. And the grace of God was conspicuous in a great awakening, by which, within less than six months from the date of my ordination, thirty-three persons were added to the church, of whom twenty-four were recent converts. It is, indeed, among the most grateful of my recollections, that, during my first pastorate, I was never long without the consciousness that my ministry was owned and blessed of God.

At the close of my labors in Bennington, there were on record seventy-one names added to the list of church-members in five years and five months, fifty-four of whom were hopefully converted under my ministry. In addition to these direct results, Sabbath schools had been instituted and kept in successful operation, the cause of temperance had been

advanced, and a general improvement of morals was visible; and seed had been sown which was destined to germinate and bear fruit in after years.

Such were the field and the prospects from which I was invited to engage in the organization and service of the American Home Missionary Society. My dismission took place, against the remonstrance of the church, December 14th, 1825. Since that date, five successive pastors have occupied the pulpit of that church, and have been more or less blessed in their labors. The last of my worthy successors there, Rev. Isaac Jennings, after the lapse of nearly forty years, writes me the following, under date of December 1st, 1863, which I may be pardoned for copying here:—

“This, until after the close of your pastorate, was the only church in the town, and, as the Dismissing Council say in their recorded paper, ‘a rich and strong one.’ You was the only young licentiate who had been at the same time ordained and installed as pastor of this church. The circumstances were peculiar, and the style of your discourses attracted the lovers of refined taste in the pulpit, while your fearlessness in preaching the truth and fidelity in rebuking immorality secured for you, to a remarkable degree, the support of such as valued sound doctrine and serious piety. Few now are left of those who so nobly sustained you in the labors of that earnest and prosperous youthful pastorate. Some sainted ones of the number have, since my occupancy of this field, ascended to their heavenly reward. But even to this day, I hear, from warm admirers of your preaching and labors here, the regret expressed—your own judgment at the time and that of the Council notwithstanding—that you persisted in the determination to leave the preaching of the Gospel as a pastor, even though it were for a post so important and interesting as that of secretary to the American Home Missionary Society.”

I cannot close my reminiscences of the church in Bennington, without recurring to a scene of surpassing interest, in which I was called to participate some five years after my dismissal from its pastoral care. My immediate successor, the late Rev. Daniel A. Clark, had already closed his ministry there, and the church was without a pastor. But where his ministers had planted and watered, God was giving the increase. It was that wonderful year of the right hand of the Most High in many of our churches, 1831. In connection with the preaching of Rev. E. N. Kirk, then of Albany, and others who had temporarily supplied the pulpit, a great revival of religion had been wrought. A large number of the hopefully converted had been examined and accepted, and were awaiting a formal admission to the Church at the next Communion day, September 4th. I was present by invitation, preached on the occasion, presided at the administration of the Lord's Supper, and admitted one hundred and thirty-one persons, on confession of their faith, to their first communion at the Lord's table! Their ages ranged from thirteen to seventy years, and seventy-six of the number, not having been baptized in infancy, received the sacrament of baptism.

To me, and to the immense audience assembled, the occasion was inexpressibly solemn, joyful, and inspiring. We were not strangers to each other. They were my own dear people, whom I had cherished with the ardor of the first love of a Christian minister—their names and faces familiar. There were the children I had left in the Sabbath school, now arisen to maturer years. There, too, were the last young couple I had united in marriage before leaving my pastorate, and others, with whom and for whom I had labored and prayed, apparently almost in vain; and now, to see so many of them “sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints”—

“My rapture seemed a pleasing dream,
The grace appeared so great.”

The baptismal service alone, for seventy-six persons in succession, which was performed wholly by myself, occupied all of two hours. Yet this with the other protracted exercises produced no weariness in the congregation. A wakeful, earnest attention and a tearful interest pervaded the assembly, and indicated a Divine presence above and around us.

My text was Isaiah lx. 8: “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” Applying these words to the vision before us, and to the clustering signs of the times of that day, we seemed indeed to be standing at “the beginning of the end,” when, we are assured, the Gentiles shall come to this light, and kings to the brightness of its rising. And we heard, as it were, the voice of the Lord of Hosts to ourselves: “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise. Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.” The rapt vision of our faith, which appropriated these promises, was doubtless true; and we bless God for the gracious visitation which thus impressed it upon our belief. The memory of it is precious in old age, as it ever has been through all the changes that have since passed upon the nation. Nor do we admit a doubt that even the baptism of blood through which we are now passing will accelerate its accomplishment.

NOTE G, PAGE 16.

“To spread the health of truth and grace.”

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and the American Bible, Tract, and Education Societies,

were organized during my preparatory and college course, or soon after. I was familiar with the spirit in which they had their origin, and pondered deeply the responsibilities and claims of the foreign missionary work. My ministry was commenced under impulses awakened by these purely philanthropic and unsectarian institutions, and was animated by the faith and hope in which they were commenced and sustained.

NOTE II, PAGE 16.

“Came years of preparation vast.”

Late in the autumn of 1825, I accepted the call of the “United Domestic Missionary Society” to become its secretary, and as such to aid in the formation of the “American Home Missionary Society,” towards which preliminary measures had already been taken. The latter society was instituted in May, 1826, and I was appointed its first corresponding secretary, which office I held, by successive elections, until 1837 inclusive. During that time I was the principal agent of the Society in organizing and compacting its system, and extending its arrangements to combine, in one united effort and agency, all denominations of evangelical Christians who could be persuaded thus to unite, irrespective of their sectarian peculiarities, in a vigorous and persistent national endeavor to supply all the waste places of the land with a faithful and competent ministry of the Gospel. To what extent and with what spirit this purpose was accomplished, the published correspondence of the Society, and the first twelve of its annual reports, all of which were written by my own hand, will sufficiently indicate. I need only add here, that very great results were achieved in the furtherance of the Gospel. I regard those twelve years of zealous and incessant labor as quite the most useful and effective of my life.

I resigned my office as secretary of the Home Missionary

Society, in the autumn of 1837; not from any misgiving in respect to the "voluntary principle" of its organization, but mainly on account of a partial failure of my vocal organs, which required rest from the public speaking and exposure demanded by the duties of that office. I, however, remained a member of the executive committee until 1844, when I accepted a pastoral charge too remote to allow my attendance at its meetings, and I reluctantly withdrew from a participation of its weekly and almost daily councils. The best energies of my life had been devoted to its service; and while I remember the catholic unity in which it had its origin and aim, it is to me a mystery unfathomable that any of the Christian denominations, who praised it at first, and seemed fully to comprehend its noble purpose, have since abandoned so grand a principle of co-operative energy for the upbuilding of the kingdom of Christ, and, in its place, have subsidized even the sacred work of missions to the perpetuation and spread of their respective sectarian peculiarities.

NOTE I, PAGE 16.

"Of conflict years, and years of peace."

Conscious as I ever have been, of a disposition to live peaceably with all men, and perhaps uncommonly sensitive to the good opinion of others, it has often appeared strange to me that I have met so frequent occasions of conflict and controversy. These conflicts, I can truly say, have never been sought by me. On the contrary, I have ever shrunk from their responsibilities, and would gladly have avoided them. But they seemed at the time to be forced upon me by principles and positions which it was my duty to maintain and defend. Such were the conflicts of my early ministry at Bennington, where I learned the lesson before named in these notes.

Such, too, in an eminent degree, were my advocacy of the principles and operations of voluntary societies against the assaults of their opposers, and my defence of the Rev. Albert Barnes, in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.

The necessity of similar conflicts I now regard as often unavoidable in the life of every earnest man, who is called to bear a leading part in the accomplishment of great things for the kingdom of Christ. I have therefore no reason to regret that such conflicts have fallen to my lot. Whatever of personal sacrifice they may have involved, has been more than repaid by the consciousness of high resolves of duty, and of fealty to Him who judgeth righteously. To Him also I have learned to look for the forgiveness of whatever may have been wrong in the spirit of my advocacy, even of a good cause, and patiently to wait for the vindication of motives and purposes, which even Christian men, of opposing opinions, are often slow to recognize.

But prominent as these controversies may have appeared, because occurring in the high places of a great denominational church, they really absorbed but a very small part of my ministerial life. Most of my labors in two pastorates of about fifteen years, and in the missionary service, were labors of love, peaceful and happy, because in conflict only with the darkness of the world, which the gospel everywhere encounters. The indirect results of my labors in the cause of missions were largely reported in the missionary publications of the day, but can never be estimated. Direct and blessed effects, however, were often apparent. In the twelve years of my agency for the A. H. M. S., I travelled in nearly all of the United States and Territories, as they then were, a distance of, perhaps, three times the circumference of the globe, preached in churches of different denominations, at Presbyterian camp-meetings in the West, and on many interesting

occasions, at the the meetings of Presbyteries, Synods, Associations, and other public bodies. On many of these occasions, the Divine presence was manifest in gracious awakenings and conversions.

It is truly grateful to be reminded, at this late day, that such scenes still live in the memory of others. A recent letter from my friend, the Rev. Dr. Bouton, of Concord, New Hampshire, with whom I spent a few days in 1831, recounts such a scene, and closes with this warm-hearted assurance:—"I have often thanked the Lord, brother, for the service you rendered on that glorious occasion. As the fruit of that blessed revival, one hundred and one souls were added to this church."

Similar acknowledgments occasionally reach me from other and distant parts of the vineyard, and I bless God that my name is still associated with some, at least, of the precious memories of many churches. Few, however, remain of the pastors and people with whom, so long ago, I spent those brief and pleasant sojourns in labors of love.

NOTE J, PAGE 17.

"Then years of editorial toil."

As secretary of the American Home Missionary Society, I commenced and edited the *Home Missionary and Pastor's Journal*, from 1827 to 1837, assisted by my beloved associate secretary, the late Rev. Charles Hall, D.D. After this, having resigned my office as secretary, I assumed the editorial charge of *The American Biblical Repository* (a religious quarterly), beginning with January, 1838, and continued it four and a half years, aided successively by Rev. S. B. Treat, now one of the secretaries of the A. B. C. F. M., and Prof. J. H. Agnew. Meantime, in January, 1841, I commenced the publication of the *American Eclectic* (bi-monthly), the plan of which was

originated by myself. Of this also I had the leading editorial charge, aided as above, until May, 1842, when both the *Eclectic* and the *Repository* passed into the hands of Prof. Agnew. Here my editorial labors were suspended, until, after my pastorate at Williamstown, January, 1856, I commenced *The American Journal of Education and College Review*, of which I was the principal editor. But, though welcomed and approved by the leading patrons of education, it was not well sustained, and, after a useful continuance of fourteen months, failed by the lack of pecuniary support.

NOTE K, PAGE 17.

“’Twas mine to guide another flock.”

I relinquished my editorial labors in 1842, to engage in an agency for the “Union Theological Seminary of the City of New York,” of which I was one of the original projectors, and a director, and served it for about two years, as its principal agent for the collection of funds. Meantime I was appointed professor of “Homiletics and Pastoral Theology” in that institution; but in 1844, I resigned both my professorship and agency, and on the 20th of November of that year was installed pastor of the “First Church of Christ,” in Williamstown, Massachusetts. My congregation there was composed of a large portion of the people of the town, and the faculty and students of Williams College, who, by a happy arrangement at that time, worshipped together, the president of the college, in term-time, bearing a stipulated part in the supply of the pulpit. Few pastors are favored with audiences so intellectual and appreciative; and the religious sympathies of both the college and the people were in a high degree stimulating and encouraging to the best endeavors of a faithful minister. Pleasant indeed to

myself and family, were most of the associations of that pastorate; and it is grateful to record, that it was not unattended with spiritual benefits to the people. During my active discharge of its duties (about eight years), several special awakenings were enjoyed, and one hundred and five members were added to the church, of whom seventy-five were received on profession of their faith. In addition to these, not a few united with the College Church, whose young men I ever regarded as among the most interesting, and perhaps the most interested, of my hearers.

In 1852, I asked a temporary release from my pastoral charge, to engage in the service of the college, of which I was a trustee, and whose condition required an effort to increase its funds. In this service I continued about two years, only occasionally preaching at home, until 1854, when I resigned my pastorate. My resignation, however, was not immediately accepted, and my formal dismissal did not occur till September 4th, 1857.

I was sixty-one years old when I asked to resign my pastoral charge, and was led to this measure by an apprehended approaching unfitness for its demands, which was, perhaps, more sensitively felt by myself than intelligently perceived by others. My vocal utterances, on account of an affection of my throat, had become at times embarrassing, and the *scrivener's paralysis* had deprived my right hand of its cunning. The nerves of the hand especially exercised in writing had, by long use, become worn out and paralyzed, and I was obliged to do all my writing with the left hand, and with much labor and fatigue. These infirmities and other indications of advancing age were upon me, and I could not divest myself of the impression that I was already an old man, and ought to retire from the responsibilities of a position so important, and to the duties of which I had so much reason

to apprehend my waning powers would soon become inadequate. Yet my general health was good, and I was still comforted with the prospect of perhaps a few years of usefulness in more miscellaneous employments. In this I have not been disappointed. Nor have I been reluctant to embrace opportunities of useful employment. Besides editing the *College Review*, as before stated, I have written for other periodicals and papers, have preached occasionally in and about New York, and supplied pulpits for some weeks and months, in succession, in Morristown, New Jersey, Otisville, New York, and Goshen, Connecticut. I also labored several months in 1857, in the service of "The American and Foreign Christian Union;" and in 1860-61, I wrote, with my left hand, and with great labor and care, a volume to be entitled, *Co-operative Christianity: The Kingdom of Christ in Contrast with Denominational Churches*. This volume would have been published in 1861, but for the bombardment of Fort Sumter, and the consequent great war of the Union. I still cherish the hope of giving it to the public. In these and other engagements I have been diligently employed, and can truly add that I have suffered no idle day.

NOTE L, PAGE 18.

"The years of wedded life and love."

My wife, Harriet Hinkly Hatch, was a daughter of the late Major Reuben Hatch, of Norwich, Vermont. We were married October 25th, 1819, and, at the date of this memorial, had lived a wedded life of nearly forty-four years, to which two years have since been added, crowned with the goodness of God. Even in bereavement we have learned to rejoice, because we believe in the Resurrection and the Life.

NOTE M, PAGE 18.

“Sweet infants raised from earthly love.”

The children here referred to are Horace Hatch, born in Bennington, Vermont, November 4th, 1825—died September 15th, 1827, aged twenty-two months and eleven days; Frances Margaretta, born in New York, March 6th, 1831—died May 4th, 1832, aged thirteen months and twenty-nine days.

Our surviving children are George Absalom, a physician in New York, born in Bennington, Vermont, May 12th, 1821; Harriet Adeline, wife of Rev. William Clift, now of New York, also born in Bennington, June 13th, 1823; Edward Payson, late a captain in the United States Volunteer service, born in New York, October 9th, 1828; Mary Elizabeth, wife of Albert S. Ward, of New York, born in New York, May 13th, 1835; James Hugh, of New York, born in the same city, November 13th, 1837.

DEATH OF MRS. MARY ELIZABETH WARD.

Mary Elizabeth, our youngest daughter, of precious memory in the family and among a loving circle of youthful friends, died in New York, January 2d, 1864, aged twenty-eight years, seven months, and twenty days. The touching scenes of her death, and the greatness of our disappointment and bereavement, will be sufficiently indicated by the following papers. The address of Dr. Thompson to her funeral was reported at the time with a view to its early publication; but has been preserved as a fitting conclusion to this commemorative volume. She was a beloved member of his church; and no reader, it is presumed, will fail to be interested in this affecting tribute to her memory.

ADDRESS OF THE REV. JOSEPH P. THOMPSON, D. D., PASTOR
OF THE "BROADWAY TABERNACLE CHURCH," NEW YORK,
AT THE FUNERAL OF MRS. MARY ELIZABETH WARD, JANU-
ARY 5th, 1864.

This scene, my friends, is one of memorable and impressive realities. Death is here as a reality. For a whole generation, the family in which she who lies before us was born and nurtured has been unvisited by Death. Yes, it is more than thirty years since an infant sister preceded her to the skies. But there can be no permanent exemption; and Death has come to them once more as a reality. The sense of bereavement is a reality—the pain of loss, the anguish of parting, a reality. The severance of fondest loves, the disappointment of dearest hopes, the sudden extinction of the light and joy of the dwelling, these all are realities. Yet there are other realities, which these serve to make more vivid and palpable.

If death is a reality, so is the soul a reality that cannot die. As we look upon her face, recalling all that was so bright and beautiful in her life, we feel, we *know*, that she is not dead. God is a reality; Christ and his salvation, in which she trusted, are realities; the future state is a reality; heaven is a reality, whose light scatters even the gloom of this hour. And were it not for these grand and glorious realities, I could not bear so much as to enumerate those other realities that press so heavily upon us.

There are two theories concerning death, which may fitly be tested by our emotions and our needs at such a time as this. The one makes death a mere process of nature, coming in the due course of things, by inexorable physical law, alike to man and to the brute creation. By this theory, God, if there be a God, dwells at an infinite remove from us, not caring what

befalls us, or leaving us to the fixed mechanism of natural laws and forces. We are here, the insects of a day, and when our natural limit expires, we cease to be. Now, whatever our speculations in this matter may have been, I ask: Can we believe that theory here to-day? Can we fall back upon it to satisfy our own hearts? Can we bring it as our tribute to the memory of her we have so dearly loved? Will self-respect, will a regard for the mind and heart that made her so bright and loving and joyous in our circle, suffer us to stand beside her yet unclosed coffin, and say, "This is Nature's law," and say no more? The heart needs sympathy, not law. The heart needs consolation, but a law of nature yields no consolation. The heart would offer respect and affection to her memory, and feels it an indignity to speak of her as of the brutes that perish. By all the strength of affection, by all the sincerity and earnestness of grief, by all the homage of esteem for what was pure and lovely, by all the memories of cherished years, the heart, fitly instructing the reason, protests against such a view of death.

There is, then, another view of death, which, equally accepting the operation of natural laws, regards these as appointed, directed, and applied by a living and loving Father, whose wise arrangement, consulting the highest good of both the dying and the living, determines the time and circumstances to each, of that event which is the common lot of all. This theory presents us not cold, inexorable law, but love, guiding the laws which itself has ordained, and which are wise, and necessary, and good. In such a view of death, there is a place for sympathy; and, like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord doth pity us. In such a view there is a place for consolation, and Jesus, who wept for Lazarus, comes again, the Man of sorrows, to mingle His tears with ours. In such a view

there is a place for hope, through Jesus, the risen Lord, the resurrection and the life.

This was the faith that cheered and animated her daily life, and that gave such holy serenity in her death. Her keen and vigorous mind, her disciplined understanding, did not grasp an illusion, and make *this* her hope in life and her comfort and rejoicing in the last hour. The faith in which she lived and died took hold upon a reality.

In this faith she was consecrated in her infancy, and was trained in a household where religion was every thing, and the atmosphere was that of an intelligent and cheerful piety. Early in life she came to recognize and accept it as her own. The native vivacity of her disposition, the joyousness of her spirit, borrowed no gloom from her piety. On the contrary, religion but added to her joys, refining, elevating, enriching all. How readily she turned the buoyancy of her nature into the offices of wifely affection and maternal love! How her taste for flowers, worthily represented by these offerings of love, beautified the home where she was ever the choicest presence! I count her among the most cheerful Christians I have ever known—a soul thorough in its experiences, deep and sincere in its communion with God, but sparkling with the gush and overflow of her affections and her joys. Whatever cares and burdens she carried in secret to the Master, for us her conversation was always lively, her manner always cheerful, and, often, when her body was tortured with pain, her spirit maintained its accustomed serenity and enlivened those about her.

Death brought her no surprise. Though coming suddenly and sharply, and at the festive time of the opening year, it wrung from her no expression of alarm, of disappointment, or regret. What messages of wisdom and affection she gave to those about her—her grateful love to aged parents, her ten-

der counsels and sacred trusts to her nearest earthly friend, and her charges for the children to be brought up in the faith of their mother's God!

What remains for us, my friends, but that we gain and hold the like precious faith—that, renouncing sin, we walk in the faith and the love of the same Saviour?

When a little child, scarce three years old, she was so bright and winning in her childish glee, that a stranger, who saw her on a journey, was moved to adopt her as his own; and approached her parents with the most delicate and liberal offers, engaging to educate her suitably and to settle upon her his entire property. Her parents, of course, while gratified by the compliment, could but smile at the proposal. But presently, as she budded into a higher consciousness, another came, and sought to adopt her as his own, saying: "Let her be mine, and I will enrich her with all my gifts, and name her with my name; but she must love me more than father or mother, or all the world beside." And now her parents could not, would not, say Him nay, for already they had given her to Him, in the covenant of baptism; and so, He adopted her for His child, clothed and enriched her with all the graces of His spirit, and, when His time came, He took her, redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, to enjoy the fulness of the inheritance pledged in His adopting love. And so it but remains for us, joined to the same family, redeemed by the same blood, to wait in turn our call to follow her to the same home.

IN MEMORIAM.*

The world above, the heavenly world sublime,
Afar away beyond the years of time—
The Lamb, the light thereof—has claim'd its own;
And, reaping there what she on earth had sown,
An angel-daughter treads the shining shore,
Where mortals here are mortals never more.

Born here to life, here taught by faith to fly—
How brief her pupilage! born here to die!
We lean'd our hoary age upon her youth,
And fondly thought her faithfulness and truth,
Her filial kindness, in our joys and tears,
Would far outlast our own declining years.
Our yearning love she so repaid; but soon,
Alas! a morning sun went down at noon—
Cold Winter's ground, with "dust to dust," her bed—
And Mary dear, young, beautiful, was dead!

Sad tears of love we shed—the parting hours—
And deck'd our dead with blooming emblem-flowers—
Though well we knew 'twas only death that died;
Life, living still, redeem'd and sanctified,
On pinions new—by grace prepared—and bright,
Left many mourners here, and wing'd its flight.

For not alone a daughter, Mary stood—
A sister dear, beloved, gifted, good—

* These lines appeared in the "New York Evangelist," near the time of their date.

A wedded wife, and—rich the mother's joy—
Two sweet loving girls and her baby boy
Drew forth her soul, in time, and toil, and care,
To train them aright, and her daily prayer
Attested the strength of her faithful love,
Her earnest believing of things above.
Yet genial and buoyant her tone of mind,
Sportive her spirit, and joyous, and kind,
She wielded a power but rarely attain'd,
To hold the true friends affection had gain'd.

So budded and blossom'd her life below—
As fitted to stay, as ready to go.
Nor blossoms alone the crown of her bearing,
Ripe fruit, and hopeful, in clusters appearing;
Nor saw we how great was her gain to die,
Ever wishing her with us, ever nigh;
And *seem'd* our loss much more than all her gain,
When we wept at her bed of death and pain;
Nor parents, nor lover, children, nor peers
Could stay her departure, with grief and tears.

As mourners now we "go about the street,"
And ev'ry youthful, earnest face we meet,
Renews our mem'ry of our loved one gone,
Her work of one score years and eight adone,
And places that knew her so late, of yore,
But shall know her again, ah, never more!

We think of all she was to us, on earth,
Back from her grave to the day of her birth,

And what, to us, she will be soon, above,
When united again, in realms of love;
And hail the life, begun and rising thus,
As e'er a priceless boon to ours and us.
We see it now, a whole forevermore—
Give thanks for the gift, the Giver adore,
And praise Him here, amid our grief and tears,
For the life unmeasured by days and years.

A life! a joy! a death! then deathless life!
No sorrow there, nor sickness, sin, or strife!
So lives the ransom'd soul, in bliss supreme,
'Mid songs of gladness, saving grace the theme!

Be silent, then, our grief, nor e'er complain,
That death is made the way that life to gain.
Foredating our part in those heavenly lays,
Be steadfast our faith, until, ending our days,
We rise to that life, with our daughter dear,
Rise up with all the good and faithful here,
To live with them, where partings never come,
Of spirit-life, the realm, the bliss, the home.

A. P.

NEW YORK, *August*, 1864.

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